

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration and allowance of this application are respectfully requested.

Currently, claims 1-12, 14, 16-18 and 20-23 are pending in this application.

Request for Return of Form PTO-1449:

On January 5, 2001, an Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) with Form PTO-1449 was filed in the present application. As of the present date, however, a fully initialed and dated Form PTO-1449 has not been returned to Applicant. Applicant respectfully requests that the Form PTO-1449 be fully initialed and dated as an indication that the cited references have been fully considered, and then the fully initialed and dated Form PTO-1449 returned. For the Examiner's convenience, Applicant has attached hereto a fresh copy of the Form PTO-1449.

Request for Acknowledgment of Receipt of Certified Copies of the Priority

Documents:

The Office Action acknowledges Applicant's claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. §119. However, the Office Action indicates that "None" of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received. This indication that "None" of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received is not understood since it contradicts the explicit indication that the priority documents have been received in the Notification of Acceptance of Application Under 35 U.S.C. §371 and 37 CFR 1.494 or 1.495 (Form PCT/DO/EO/903) mailed from the U.S. Patent Office on February 6, 2001. In light of this earlier acknowledgment by the USPTO that priority documents have in fact been

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received, Applicant respectfully submits that the next Office Action confirm that at least copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in the present national stage application.

Title:

A new title has been provided.

Drawings:

Formal replacement sheets of drawings and annotated sheets showing changes are attached.

Objection to the Claims:

Claims 14 and 21 were objected to under 37 CFR 1.75(c) as being of improper dependent form for failing to further limit the subject matter of a previous claim. Claim 14 has been rewritten in independent form. The dependency of claim 21 has been changed so that this claim now depends from claim 23. Claim 21 further limits claim 23. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the objections to claims 14 and 21 be withdrawn.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102 and §103:

Claims 1-3, 12, 16 and 18-19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Nielsen (U.S. '054). Claims 7-11, 20 and 22-23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as allegedly being unpatentable over Nielsen. Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

For a reference to anticipate a claim, each element must be found, either expressly or under principles of inherency, in the reference. In order to establish a prima facie case of obviousness, all of the claimed limitations must be taught or suggested by the prior art. Applicant submits that Nielsen fails to disclose or suggest each limitation of the claimed invention. For example, Nielsen fails to disclose or suggest "...forwarding a received specification of user requirements *selectively via a further requirements matching server* to one or more destinations," as required by independent claim 1 and its dependents. Independent claims 7, 12, 16, 19, 22 and 23 require similar features. Support for these features can be found on page 4, lines 6-14 of the application (as amended by the amended sheets in the international phase) which states that the user submitted requirements are routed through a *system of brokers*, page 11, lines 12-14 of the originally-filed specification which states that Routing Preferences in the Routing Preferences Store of a broker define the specialisms of *other brokers* or of suppliers to received user submitted requirements, and page 11, lines 26-28 of the originally-field application which states that, in certain circumstances, user submitted requirements can be routed to a general purpose *broker*.

Independent claim 1 therefore requires a message conveying a specification of user requirements being transmitted by a routing means of a requirement matching server *selectively via a further requirements matching server* to one or more destinations. In contrast, Nielsen discloses matchmaking script of a server computer invoking a method that posts new questions only to the personal web pages of those consultants that are

deemed most qualified to answer the question. Nielsen fails to disclose or suggest the possibility that the new questions are posted to another server computer. Nielsen discloses only one server computer as apparently admitted by page 7, item 18 of the Office Action.

By allowing a message conveying a specification of user requirements to be selectively transmitted via a further requirements matching server, the present invention provides a higher probability that a user's requirements will be fulfilled since if the first requirements matching server cannot find a potential supplier to route a message to, the first requirements matching server can route the message to another requirements matching server which may contain a routing rule that does contain the address of suitable supplier. (See, e.g., page 11, lines 12-28 of the originally-filed application.) Nielsen's disclosed system on the other hand, if there are no consultants with suitable expertise, a question will be left unanswered and the user requirements will not be fulfilled. The present invention therefore provides significant advantages over Nielsen's disclosed system.

Dependent claim 2 further requires "a message conveying a routing rule," and dependent claim 3 further requires "a message including a message routing rule." With respect to the claimed routing rules, item 7 of the Office Action cites Figs. 2-4 and col. 5, line 51 to col. 6, line 36 of Nielsen. Applicant therefore assumes that the Office Action equates the database records containing consultant information disclosed by Nielsen with the claimed routing rules. However, nowhere in Nielsen is there a teaching or suggestion

of a message that conveys such consultant database records. Nielsen therefore does not teach or suggest “a message conveying a routing rule” or “a message including a message routing rule” as required by claims 2 and 3, respectively. As discussed above, Nielsen only describes one server computer and therefore cannot possibly teach or suggest the claimed feature of transmitting “the generated message to another requirements matching server” as required by claim 3.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that claims 1-3, 7-12, 16, 18, 20 and 22-23 are not anticipated by nor rendered “obvious” over Nielsen. Applicant therefore requests that the rejections of these claims be withdrawn.

Claims 4-6 and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as allegedly being unpatentable over Nielsen in view of Miloslavsky (U.S. ‘033). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection. Claims 4-6 depend at least indirectly from claim 1 and claim 17 depends from claim 16. All of the comments made above regarding Nielsen and independent claims 1 and 16 apply equally to claims 4-6 and 17. Miloslavsky fails to remedy the above described deficiencies of Nielsen.

Claims 4-6 and 17 further relate to extracting certain types of information from a received user request message (see claims 4 and 17). Certain information conveyed within user request messages may be deemed to be of value to potential suppliers. For example, a user’s identity and return address for response (see claim 5) may be an item of information for which a supplier may be willing to pay a fee in order to be able to respond to the user’s requirement message. Hence, billing means may be included that

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are arranged to raise a charge in respect of the sender of the request to supply the extracted information (i.e., the supplier, see claim 6).

Miloslavsky describes a system for routing electronic mail to one of a plurality of support persons, each of which has a skill set suitable for responding to a certain type of email. An email is routed based on the skill set and also based on information extracted from the email. However, the information extracted from the email is itself not routed. This is contrary to claim 4 which requires that the information extracted from the received user request message is transmitted to the sender of the message requesting supply of that extracted information. Neither Miloslavsky nor Nielsen discloses this claimed feature. Moreover, Nielsen fails to disclose the billing means as alleged by the Office Action. Nielsen merely discloses a system where the customer is billed when a consultant returns an answer to the user's question.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that claims 4-6 and 17 are not "obvious" over Nielsen in view of Miloslavsky and therefore respectfully requests that the rejection of these claims under 35 U.S.C. §103 be withdrawn.

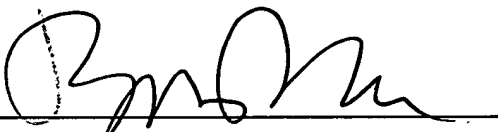
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Conclusion:

Applicant believes that this entire application is in condition for allowance and respectfully requests a notice to this effect. If the Examiner has any questions or believes that an interview would further prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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